CHAPTER - II

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC AGITATIONS

OF DEROZIO'S TIME
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i) Rammohun Roy And Agitation Of The Bengali Intellectuals

As distinct from the revolutionary movement of the people or the peasants' movement that occurred intermittently in parts of Bengal or India in the later part of 18th or in 19th century, the constitutional agitation for the amelioration of the lot of the Indians within the framework of the British rule in India, launched by Rammohun Roy, was a characteristic feature of the period of Derozio. Rammohun used the press, platform, petitions and memorials, and wrote essays with a view to continuing the constitutional agitation. These were essentially elitist means. Rammohun stood for the redress of grievances of the Indians in a constitutional manner as consistent with loyalty to and stability of the British Government.

He raised the demand for the Indianization of services. The policy of Lord Cornwallis virtually debarred the Indian from enjoying higher services. Rammohun held that natives of learning and talent, who held numerous situations of honour and emolument under the Muslim rule, "have entirely lost their political consequences under the British rule" due to their exclusion from higher posts. He urged the Government to throw gradually open situations of trust, honour and emolument in the revenue and judiciary departments which, he believed, would ensure their attachment to the Government and consolidate
its position.¹

He also raised the demand for the Indian voice over legislation. He held that not only the public functionaries but also the intelligent and wealthy classes of the people should be consulted by the Government before the enactment of any law.²

He stood for the freedom of the press from the restrictions imposed by Lord Hastings in 1818 and John Adam in March, 1823. He submitted a memorial to the Supreme Court and an appeal to the King-in-Council against the press regulations. He wanted to use the press as a constitutional means of redress of the grievances of the people. He, however, did not claim absolute liberty of the press. He demanded liberty under restraint.³

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He made a strong protest against the new Jury Bill of 1827. Charles Watkin William Wynn, the then President of the Board of Control, had a hand in framing it. It made an invidious distinction between an Indian and a European in Judicial trial. A point of his objection was that "Natives, either Hindu or Mohamedan, are rendered by this Bill subject to judicial trial by Christians, while Christians, including Native converts, are exempted from the degradation of being tried by a Hindu or Mussulman, however high he may stand in the estimation of society." ⁴

He stood for the restoration of a Punchayet system. The Punchayet, he suggested, was to consist of intelligent and respectable inhabitants, a European Judge and a native judge. ⁵

He entertained the idea of a criminal code to be founded on as far as principles common to and acknowledged by different sects and tribes inhabiting the country. ⁶

His stance on the judicial exemption was not, however, definite. He urged the Government either to increase the number of the King's courts for the trial of Europeans, if possible, or to extend the jurisdiction of the Company's Courts over them, if not. ⁷

⁷. Ibid, pp. 569-570.
He voiced his sympathy for the ryots. He contended that the Permanent Settlement had made the Zamindars the sole proprietors of land and sacrificed the proprietary interest of the cultivators, especially the "Khud Khast" ryots, or land-owning peasants, who were secure in the permanent possession of their estates on the payment of a fixed rate of rent, but were subjected to ejection and enhancement of rent by the Zamindars. Moreover, the Zamindars had raised the rent of the ryot to a great extent and manifested no intention to share the benefits of settlement with them and to ameliorate their condition.\(^8\) He, however, preferred the Zamindari to Ryotwari Settlement, because he believed that under the former system one class of people could attain to prosperity while under the latter system everyone remained wretched.\(^9\) But he suggested some measures for the improvement of the lot of the peasants within the framework of the Permanent Settlement. He stood for a permanent fixation of the ryots' rents, issue of 'Pattahs' and prohibition upon abwabs and cesses.\(^10\) He proposed a reduction in the ryots' rent. The consequent loss of income

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to be suffered by the Government, he thought, might be met by increasing taxes upon luxurious articles.  

At the time of Rammohun the issue of indigo plantation and colonization of India by Europeans (or settlement of Europeans in the interior of India) was highly controversial. European Free Traders demanded the removal of restrictions on the settlement of Europeans in the interior and the investment of European skill and capital in the land. They stood for indigo plantation and colonization.

The landlords, who regarded land as the chief source of income and wealth and kept aloof from commercial enterprise, were opposed to indigo plantation. They pointed out the oppression and exploitation of the poorer individuals by indigo planters. They maintained that indigo plantation would "injure the stability of the empire and interests of Zamindars and ryots alike".

But the Zamindar-merchants and their associates stood for indigo plantation. At a meeting held in December, 1829 in support of the petition of English Free Traders for colonization, Dwarakanath Tagore admitted that there might be certain cases of oppression of the planters, but he

11. Majumdar, B.B. op. cit., p. 70.
pointed out that they were "extremely limited" and of the most trifling importance.  

Rammohun Roy, like Dwarakanath Tagore, admitted that there might be certain exceptions regarding the general conduct of the indigo planters. But both dwelt upon the advantages of indigo plantation. Dwarakanath maintained that both Zamindars and ryots benefitted from it. Rammohun held that "in many instances the planters have successfully protected the ryots against the tyranny and oppression of their landlords." He maintained that "the greater the intercourse with European gentlemen, the greater will be our improvement in literary, social and political affairs." He had faith in the liberalism of Europeans in disseminating the light of knowledge among the natives, dispelling their prejudice and superstitions and improving agriculture and industry of the country. He also hoped that the drain of wealth would be stopped by European settlement in the interior. He maintained that colonial misrule drove

14. Ibid.
15. Ibid
19. Ghose, Jogendra Chunder et al., p. 575.
America into rebellion but colonial liberalism would strengthen the British rule over India for long, if not for ever.²⁰

It would be very pertinent to state that just after the Mutiny of 1857, the peasantry of middle Bengal rose in rebellion against the Indigo Planters. This historical event totally contradicted the assertion that 'colonization' would be beneficial for India, and Bengal in particular.

Men like Raja Rammohun Roy and Dwarkanath Tagore did not fully comprehend the negative aspects of British imperialism. They lived within the imperialist system, and derived considerable benefits from their long association with the British imperialist.

In fine, the Company's monopoly became a subject of controversy on the eve of the renewal of the Chater Act in 1833. European Free Traders and their Indian associates attacked the Company's monopoly. Rammohun took a useful and leading part in the abolition of the odious salt monopoly and salt tax on behalf of his countrymen.²¹ He attended a public meeting, held in the Town Hall on December 15, 1829 to petition the British Parliament to throw open China and

²⁰ Collet, S.D. loc. cit., pp. 336-338; Majumdar, S.B. op. cit., pp. 73 & 77.
India trade.\textsuperscript{22} He and his associates including Dwarkanath Tagore signed the petition adopted at the meeting which also raised the demand for the abolition of restrictions on free trade.\textsuperscript{23}

ii) \textbf{The Eurasian Agitation}:

The Eurasian agitation was an interesting episode of the time with which Derozio was connected. We now trace the origin and development of the agitation.

In January, 1822, the Supreme Court of Calcutta declared that a large proportion of East Indians did not come under the denomination of British subjects. In consequence of the decision the Eurasians were denied the status of British subjects, and rights and privileges enjoyed by the latter. They were prohibited from being sent to England for education.\textsuperscript{24} In the 'Hufasal' they had the benefits neither of 'Habeas Corpus' nor trial by Jury. They did not enjoy the benefit of exemption from the jurisdiction of the Company's courts in the interior and of the privilege of being tried by the English law and English Judge in the Supreme Court of Calcutta. They were in the interior subject to the rule of the Mohomedan law in criminal matters.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{22} Collet, S.D., op. cit., p. 270.
\textsuperscript{24} Edwards, Thomas, \textit{Henry Derozio, The Eurasian Poet, Teacher And Journalist} (2nd edition), 99-100.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid, p. 101.
Moreover, they were excluded from higher services. Many of them were debarred from entering the British army, or indeed, from serving India in any but the lowest offices of the service. Before the year 1791 the Company's services, civil and military, were open to Eurasians and members of that community before that date, and for some time after, held positions in the services. 26

The causes that worked together to produce this exclusion from the highest offices of the Indian services are not far to seek. In all probability an amount of self-conceit was apparent among many individuals of Eurasian birth. There might have been foolish talk and vapouring amongst the more restless and headstrong. All these might have confounded the official circle about the loyalty of the Eurasians and damaged considerably their chances of occupying any but subordinate posts, and represented them as a dangerous element to be suppressed and regarded with suspicion. Besides, there can be little doubt that the influence of many Directors and other Indian officials was exerted to prevent the rise of Eurasians to higher offices, in order that European uncles and cousins might not meet in various services of India and be continually associated on terms of equality with nephews and cousins born of native women. 27

26. Ibid.
27. Ibid., pp. 99-100, 102-103.
It is interesting to note that up to the renewal of the Charter Act of 1833 the general tendency of the Company was to level Eurasians to the rank of Indians, while at the same time offices to which natives are eligible, such as, those of the Munsiffs and Sudder Ameens, were closed to Eurasians. When lavish grants were made for the education of the natives, no provision was made for that of Eurasians.\textsuperscript{28}

The British policy of exclusion roused a sharp reaction among the Eurasians. Christians by profession, education and habits, they were in the eye of the law natives. The Eurasian generals commanded the Bombay army during the campaigns of 1803, 1804 and 1805, and some Eurasians of the time were notable for fearless bravery and gallantry in action.\textsuperscript{29} Yet fears were entertained about the loyalty of Eurasians, chiefly among the servants of the Company,\textsuperscript{30} and they were excluded from higher services or even from some relatively higher services enjoyed by the natives. They were aggrieved with the Company's Government. They launched a movement in 1822 for the grant of rights and privileges equally with the British subjects in a constitutional manner. It culminated the submission of into the petition of the East Indians and Christian inhabitants of Calcutta and the provinces comprised within the "Presidency of Fort William" to the British Parliament on

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid, pp. 100-101.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid, pp. 101-102.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid, pp. 99-100.
May 29, 1830. At a general meeting of the Eurasian Committee held in the Town Hall on April 20, 1829, J.W. Ricketts was unanimously appointed the Agent of the East Indians. On behalf of the Eurasians J.W. Ricketts submitted the petition to the Parliament.

The first petition of the East Indian stated that they were without a definite code of civil law while they were in the interior. It also resented the exclusion of the East Indian from the privilege of being tried by the English law in the Supreme Court, from higher offices in the civil, military and marine services of the East India Company, from those subordinate employments in the Judicial, revenue and police departments, and even in the military service, which were open without reserve to the Hindus and the Muslims of the country, and from the holding of His Majesty's commission in the British Indian army. It complained that the treaties with the native powers of India debarred the East Indian from being employed in any capacity in the native princely states without the permission of the Company's Government. It further complained that the educational institutions like the Parental Academic Institution (Doveton College) and the Calcutta Grammar School were denied financial help out of funds, which the East India Company was required by the

Act of Parliament to apply to moral and intellectual improvement of the natives of India. Moreover, they were also denied official patronage in their endeavour to go to England for education. It was expected that their grievances would be attended to by the Government. 33

iii) The Kaleidoscope And Agitations Of The Time:

The Kaleidoscope edited by Derozio 34 published a number of articles, which touched upon some issues of the time so far as the Indians and the East Indians were concerned. It is not, however, proper to attribute the


34. It is evident from the original records that Derozio was the editor and proprietor of the Kaleidoscope along with David Drummond (his teacher). Derozio and Drummond prayed to G. Swinton, the Chief Secretary to the Government, for a license to start a monthly magazine as editors and proprietor on January 15, 1828, and were granted it on January 24, 1828. - Home Public Department (Letters No. 85-86), January 24, 1828, pp. 460-462.
articles to Derozio's pen. If one goes through these, one may suggest that these, if not written by Derozio, speak of the sentiment of men around Derozio, possibly European or Eurasian, on the political and economic agitation of the time.

In the selections from the Kaleidoscope published by Gautam Chattopadhyay, there are a few articles, which are concerned with the condition of the Eurasian or the East Indian. It is, however, interesting to note that the

35. Selections from the Kaleidoscope (between August, 1829 and July, 1830) have been published by Chattopadhyay, Gautam in his (ed.) book "Bengal: Early Nineteenth Century" (Selected Documents), pp. 3-139. There are unsigned articles and signed articles under the pen names of E.E., S.J., M.T., J.S., A. Wanderer etc. It may be noted that Derozio wrote under various pen names of "Juvenis", "East Indian", "Loparello", "Khusroo" and "D'Edwards, Thomas". Selections From The "Inedited Prose And Poetry of Derozio", The Calcutta Review, Vol. 75, 1882, p. 214). The articles written under other pen names do not go to Derozio's credit. It is surprising that Gautam Chattopadhyay has attributed articles under the pen name of S.J. to Derozio (Chattopadhyay, Gautam, loc. cit., Introduction, p. vii). There is no definite evidence to prove that the unsigned articles came from Derozio's pen. It may safely be said that the articles, signed or unsigned, were published in the Kaleidoscope edited and managed by Derozio along with Drummond.

36. To cite, for example, "East Indians In the Mufussil" "The Laws which Affect East Indians In The Mufussil" No. I (only one instalment of the article has been published), The Kaleidoscope, No. I, August, 1829, Reprinted in Chattopadhyay, Gautam, Bengal: Early Nineteenth Century, pp. 6-16; Also "Remarks On The Condition Of East Indians" (200 miles from Calcutta), The Kaleidoscope, No. 5, December, 1829; "Colonization Of East Indians", J.S. The Kaleidoscope, Vol. II, No. VIII, March 1830; "On The Colonization Of India By Europeans" (August, 1829) J.S. The Kaleidoscope, No. 2, September 1829; Chattopadhyay, Gautam, op. cit., pp. 32-35, 84-94, & 111-115.
writers of some articles showed interest in some of the issues of the constitutional agitation of a number of Bengali intellectuals led by Rammohun Roy.

A writer pointed out that the aristocratic or respectable classes of natives were in a state of humiliation due to the policy of exclusion. He held that the Government should immediately throw open a little more respectable office or some field of usefulness to them in order to secure their loyalty. He felt that the native demand for service was not unreasonable.

A writer, however, maintained that the ill-feeling entertained by the higher classes for their exclusion from the dignified offices of trust and emolument and the monopoly of Europeans over them was founded "upon feeling of pride and nothing else", because the British Government was by far the best Government that had as yet ruled over India. But he felt that the native dissatisfaction for not having a share in the Government was "a natural and laudable feeling."

The issue of Indian voice in legislation evoked some support from a writer. He argued that the official channel through which the native feeling was collected could hardly be authentic in a country where caste was a barrier to social mobility and free exchange of opinion, and the people, even the respectable classes, were not free in the presence of European bureaucrats or Europeans.  

A writer put forward a few suggestions for judiciary reform. He held that the courts were at a great distance from the litigant parties, and that the Darogahs were notorious for corruption and extortion of money from each and every one. He suggested that for the sake of public convenience there should be petty 'mofusil' judges, civil and criminal, the appeal lying to the Sudder Court. He had in his mind the trial by Jury or of a kind of the Punchayet consisting of a local judge and jury with local practitioners. He, however, held that the legal


41. "Sketches Of The Present State of British India" (F. Sylhet), No. V., the Kaleidoscope, Vol. II, No. ix, April, 1830, Chattopadhyay, Gautam, loc. cit., p. 61.

42. Chattopadhyay, Gautam, op. cit., pp. 67-68.

code of England was preferable to the Hindu or Muslim one which, he believed, was defective, obsolete and not conducive to the welfare of the people.\footnote{44}

It is interesting to note that a writer held that it was difficult for the poor peasants to seek justice in the court at a huge expense.\footnote{45}

The \textit{Kaleidoscope}, however, published an article, which was against the movement for a free press:

The only sensible disadvantage under which it (the press) labours here is, that the liberty of setting up a Paper or any Periodical publication does not exist in India, and that a license must be obtained for the purpose. Serious as this evil is, it is counter-balanced in some measure by the risk of suppression which fearfully overhangs the Press at the Cape.\footnote{46}

\footnote{44. "\textit{Sketches Of the Present State Of British India}'', No. IV, \textit{The Kaleidoscope}, Vol. II, No. VIII, March, 1830, Chattopadhyay, Gautam, loc. cit., p. 54.}


\footnote{46. "\textit{The East India Company's Charter}'' (E.E.), No. 1, \textit{the Kaleidoscope}, No. 2, September 1829, Chattopadhyay, Gautam, loc. cit., p. 21.}
An article in the *Kaleidoscope* supported the good intentions behind the Permanent Settlement. It was written that the settlement had a tendency "to a spirited and large improvement of the country."\(^47\)

The non-fulfilment of the benevolent intentions was attributed by it to various factors, particularly the oppression of the Zamindars (who were not cultivating ones) and their gomosthas, and the extortion of the Darogahs and their hirelings from the poor ryots. It was concluded that it was difficult for the poor ryots to seek expensive justice in the court and they were, therefore, obliged to put up with wrongs and oppression, and reduced to abject poverty, adding "to the number of those hundreds, who fill the streets of every city in the country with their cries."\(^48\)

It was also held that the ryots were too poor and too ignorant of the methods of improving land. Moreover, they were held guilty of chicanery of fraudulent deal of evading "Khajna", causing loss of revenue in many zamindaris and driving them ultimately into the auction sale.\(^49\)

It is a peculiar feature of the above article that the ryots were bracketed along with the zamindars for the


\(^{49}\) Chattopadhyay, Gautam, loc. cit., pp. 96-98.
failure of the Permanent Settlement in its benevolent intentions - a feature which exposed the limit of its sympathy for the poor and unfortunate class of natives. There was a concern that there could be no improvement unless material changes took place in the entire system, but there was no definite suggestion for reform.

Indigo plantation and colonization became the subject of a few articles in the Kaleidoscope. A writer contended that "it is from their own landlords and the public native officers that they (natives) receive most occasion for complaint" and that the ryots, who were subjected to inhuman oppression and exploitation of the Gomasthas of the native zamindars, would find in the Christian Zamindars more humane and honest men. 50

Another writer held that colonization had proved to be a safeguard to the British Government against internal rebellion and foreign invasion and advantageous to the natives in the indubitable introduction of arts and science. 51 But he pointed out the European settlers were notable for bad treatment, cruelty and oppression, causing


51. "On The Colonization Of India By Europeans " (S.J.), August, 1829, the Kaleidoscope, No. 2, September, 1829, Chattopadhyay, Gautam, op. cit., pp. 32-34.
thereby incalculable misery and dissatisfaction of the natives, which was likely to drive them into rebellion. He apprehended that the East Indians would be seriously affected by colonization and "may be reduced to the same, if not a worse condition than the Hindoos or Musselms." He entertained that colonization to be beneficial both to the governors and the governed must be followed by a liberal policy towards the natives and Indo-Britons.

There was another article in the said Paper, which was a bit critical of colonization. It concluded: -

Colonization, beyond doubt, will ultimately prove beneficial, though in its immediate effects, we cannot augur much for the natives in general, and the East Indians in particular.

It is noteworthy that a writer was in favour of the continuance of the company's monopoly. According to him, it was a fallacy to suppose that the abrogation of the Company's monopoly and free trade would be highly beneficial to the interests of both England and India. "What would be

53. Ibid.
54. Ibid, p. 35.
gained by one party would inevitably be lost by the other—that is, the advantage would rest on the side of purchasers while speculators would be sufferers. When a speculative scheme is confined to a limited circle, it thrives much better, than when it is shared by a great number."\(^56\)

But there was the note of a writer in favour of the end of the Company's rule as also of its monopoly on imperial consideration, political and economic. The vast acquisition of its territory, the vast civil and military establishment and the rapid progress in every branch of British manufacture suggested to him the end of the Company's rule.\(^57\) He concluded: "It appears altogether unsuitable that a body of merchants/should have the rule over the dominions of such magnitude and such resources. It seems fitting that an empire of such importance as India has now become, should be released from the guardianship of a monopoly."\(^58\)

Thus some of the writers in the Kaleidoscope were not altogether wanting in sympathy for the admission of the Indians into services, or for the Indian voice in legislation. Some were interested in the cause of judicial

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reform. There was, however, no writing in favour of the freedom of the press. A writer was critical of the oppression of the zamindars. But he had limited sympathy for the ryots. There were some articles in favour of indigo plantation and colonization. But some of the articles were a bit critical of colonization, pointing out the oppression and exploitation of European settlers. There was, however, not any unanimity of opinion among the writers of the Kaleidoscope regarding free trade.

IV. Derozio And His Patriotic Verses:

While a number of intellectuals of Bengal led by Rammohun Roy started constitutional agitation for the redress of grievances within the British rule, while the Eurasians were seeking to remove some of their grievances in a constitutional manner, or while the Kaleidoscope, talking of some reforms, toed basically the reformist line of Rammohun, Derozio's patriotic verses, some writers may suggest, struck up at times a revivalist note and a radical spirit of freedom from the British rule. Dr. R.C. Majumdar, to cite an example, makes the following observation, which is open to controversy:

For nationalism and patriotism in the narrow sense of love for the motherland and ardent desire for its freedom which marked the New Age, Derozio and his pupils of the Hindu College perhaps
deserve greater credit as pioneers than Rammohun Roy.⁵⁹

A number of writers has accepted Dr. Majumdar's observation without any reservation and tried to bolster it up.⁶⁰ But Majumdar's observation requires a critical examination. A Eurasian, a mere lad of only 17 or 18, Derozio, who was the first to compose patriotic verses, might be an object of indulgence to many. But if one seeks to make a proper assessment of Derozio's role in 19th century Bengal, one has to find answer to some such questions: - Whether the patriotic spirit as reflected in Derozio's verses did conform to reality? - Whether did he dream of any anti-British struggle for independence? - What was his attitude to the British rule in India or to the agitation of the


⁶⁰ Pallab Sengupta, to cite for example, observes that just before his death, Derozio desired the recitation of Campbell's 'Pleasures of Hope'. In this verse Campbell visualized freedom of India. Derozio breathed his last, visualizing such freedom (Sengupta, Pallab, Jharer Pakhi : Kabi Derozio (3rd edition, Bengali, p. 18). Pallab Sengupta's observation is controversial, where is the evidence to substantiate his view?
Bengali intellectuals led by Rammohun or to the agitation of the Eurasians?

It is interesting that Derozio composed poems on India's past. Derozio was a philanthropist. He wrote: - "the path to the crown is frequently murderous and bloody, but he who strives to attain the name and character of a philanthropist establishes his claim by means which benefit mankind." 61 One may be tempted to contend that it was in this philanthropic mentality that he composed poems on the past of different countries including Italy, Portugal, France, Greece and India. But another may contend that he was born in the age of romanticism. He was inspired by the English Romantic Poets. His poems have a romantic flavour. It was in a romantic mood that he portrayed the past of different countries in a bright colour. However, he depicted Italy as a "Land of Lover and the Poet". 62 He portrayed Portugal as a grief-stricken maiden, because of her being fallen from her happy past. 63 He looked back to the past.


62. Derozio, H.L.V., "Italy", Poems, pp. 87-88; Also Appendix, I.pp. 720-721.


It is interesting to note that Derozio wrote a poem on Portugal's greatness. This "greatness" was the result of Portugal's colonization of vast stretches of Africa, Asia and Latin America where the indigenous populations were often reduced to the status of slavery. Since he was himself an Indianized Portuguese, he conveniently forget the lurid past of Portuguese colonialism.
of France when in the reign of Charles I she lost her freedom for a time and regained it sooner. He looked up to Greece as the ancient seat of European civilization, and, in a number of poems, lent moral support to the Greek struggle for freedom from Turkish rule by reminding them of their glorious heritage. It is but natural that he composed poems on India's past which, one may suggest, struck up a patriotic note. In the "Fakeer of Jungheera" he depicted India as a land of beautiful landscape. In the 'Ruins of Rajmahal' (January, 1826) he looked back to the past beauty and grandeur of the buildings of Shoojehand heaved a sigh at their crumbling ruins and decaying state. In his poems, 'The Harp of India' (March, 1827) and 'To India - My Native Land' (1828) he reminded one of India's glorious past and expressed sorrow at her prostrate state of the present time.

64. Derozio, H. L. V., "All Is Lost Save Honour" (April, 1827), "Anecdote Of Francis I" (May, 1827), Poems, pp. 110-117, 131-132; Also Appendix-I. pp. 721-723.


He also expressed a fervent wish to restore India to her pristine glory. One may hold that here Derozio showed not only his romantic bias but also his acceptance of India's past as glorious.

But he had no abiding faith in India's past. The dubious concept of Muslim rule as tyrannical, which was held by Rammohun, was shared by him. In his "Appeal to the King-in-Council" against the Press regulations Rammohun wrote: - "The greater part of Hindusthan having been for several centuries subject to Muhammedan Rule, the civil and religious rights of its original inhabitants were constantly trampled upon". He added: "The Natives of Bengal ... remained during the whole period of the Muhammedan conquest faithful to the existing Government, although their property was often plundered, their religion insulted, and their blood wantonly shed". Derozio's conception of the Muslim rule was also biased. He did not make a balanced assessment of it. He falsely regarded the Muslims as invaders, plunderers and rude disturbers of peace. He visualized bloody and desperate struggle of the Hindus against Muslim invasion or rule for freedom and

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69. Quoted by DeBary, William. Theodore - Sources Of Indian Tradition, pp. 569-570; Also Appendix-I. pp. 727-728.
invoked the epic heroes in a fervent strain. 72

It is interesting to note a contradiction in Derozio. He taught his students to criticise Hindu religious customs, observances and tradition. At the same time he referred to epic Hindu heroes, who fought against the "barbaric" Muslims. This biased attitude of Derozio towards the Muslims or the Muslim rule to a great extent reflected the official version of Indian history. Derozio did not develop any doubt about the authenticity of this distorted historiography.

He, however, did not identify himself with Hindu heritage as is supposed by some. 73 One may suggest that he lacked a faith in the reinterpretation of Hindu religion and tradition and his idea of India's past glory was glory without Hinduism. 74

72. Extracts from Derozio's poem - "The Enchantress of the Cave" and "The Golden Vase" in the Appendix. pp. 728-732. David Cameron in a review of the Poem 'The Enchantress of the Cave' observes: "We have this impassioned invocation, which is obviously addressed to the heroes of India's epic age" - Cameron David, "Derozio - the Poet", Dasgupta, Mary Anne (ed.) Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (A Memorial Volume), p. 19.

73. David Cameron remarks: "So complete was his identification with the ancient land of his birth and its cultural heritage which was essentially Hindu that, unlike most other descendants of Europeans in India, he regards even the Muslim rulers as invaders and tyrants" - Ibid, p. 19.

74. David Kopf observes: "It is more likely that his quest for a golden age or a model was not projected backward into the past but forward into the future. The way to revitalize India was not to revere the period of her past or her institutions that were already dead, but to open Indian minds to the cultural offerings of the west so that India might once share the benefits of human progress. Derozio never defined his hope for golden age" - Kopf, David, British Orientalism and Bengal Renaissance, The Dynamics of Indian Modernization, 1773-1835, p. 256.
An American writer observes - taking his cue from the patriotism of the Irish and English romantic poets, Derozio dedicated two sonnets to India - 'The Harp of India', and 'To India - My Native Land'. These poems were virtually the first expression of the sentiment of Indian nationalism, which in the twentieth century was to force the British to grant independence to India and Pakistan. The writer, however, pointed out that there was an interesting contradiction between his vision of India's glorious past (as expressed in the above poems) and the gloomy picture of India's past as a tyrant's den (as reflected in his sonnet, 1830). But he contended that Derozio foreshadowed the mental conflict of later Indian nationalists as they sought to rid the country of the evils of the past and at the same time to bolster their claim to self-rule by glorifying their ancient and honourable heritage.

But Derozio's appeal to India's past was romantic, emotional and far from a living faith. Derozio upheld the Grecian claim to liberty on an appeal to their heroic past; but he did not bolster up Indian claim to self-rule by glorifying their ancient and national heritage as is supposed by some scholars.

75. DeBary, William Theodore, Sources Of Indian Tradition, pp. 570-571.
75a. For the Sonnet, the Appendix-I. p. 717.
In the opinion of a writer, Derozio had little notion of the greatness of India's past which he celebrated in the two patriotic poems mentioned above. Obviously he read about the greatness in William Robertson's "Disquisition on India" (1781). In this work Robertson warns the British colonialists in India not to be unkind to a people whose civilization was greater than theirs. This pride was necessary for those who were to build a greater future. The writer's opinion is hypothetical. There is no evidence of Derozio's borrowing from the patriotic feeling from Robertson's "Disquisition on India".

Derozio was more a romantic poet than a patriot. Patriotism is a feeling which stems from an intense appreciation of the problems and perspectives of a country wherein the patriot lives. There is hardly any evidence of Derozio's critical evaluation of British colonialism. A deep knowledge of India's past 'glory', attributed to him by certain scholars is also questionable.

Bertrand Russell's observations on romanticism merit attention. He wrote: "The romantics liked what was strange: ghosts, ancient decayed castles, the last melancholy descendants of once great families, practitioners, mesmerism and occult sciences, falling tyrants and levantine pirates. They felt inspired only by what was grand, remote and horrifying.

In the main, the Middle Ages, and what was more medieval in the present, pleased the romantics. Very often, they cut loose from actuality, either past or present, altogether.  

V. Idea of the British Rule: The Kaleidoscope And Derozio

The Kaleidoscope mentioned above contained a number of articles, which highlighted the beneficial results of the British rule. The dubious concept of the British rule as a divine blessing and deliverance of the natives from the Muslim rule, and of its comparative superiority in the bestowal of peace and security was held by the writers of the articles. This concept was advanced by a number of writers including Rammohun Roy. In his 'Appeal to the King-in-Council' Rammohun, after alluding to oppression of the Muslim rulers, held that "Divine Providence at least in its abundant mercy, stirred up the English nation to break the yoke of those tyrants, and to receive the oppressed Native of


Bengal under its protection". But the idea of the writers of the *Kaleidoscope* about the British rule was highly biased and western in one way or other.

The British rule came to be regarded by some writers as a deliverance of the natives not only from Muslim but also from Hindu tyranny and misrule.81

The pre-British period of India was, according to a writer, a dark age, which passed away with the advent of the British.82

In the opinion of some writers, the superiority of the British over the native governments lay in the bestowal of a just and equitable administration of justice, security of person and property, peace, happiness and prosperity in place of despotism, anarchy, poverty, want and danger.83

A writer contended that instances of corruption, profligacy and abuse under the Company's rule were "after all few and individual cases" and that "for one who has perhaps suffered injustice there are perhaps thousands reposing in peace and security." 84

The blessings of the British rule, a writer wrote, must reconcile the blessed inhabitants to the overthrow of their power and the establishment of British influence. 85 Distrust and dissatisfaction with the British rule was not desirable 86 - the writer added.

Some writers felt that the extension of the British sway over the country, even over the tribal or princely states (under the system of Subsidiary Alliance) was a necessity. 87 It was even felt necessary by a writer that "not a remnant of ancient habits, moral or political, can ultimately exist". 88

A direct colonial rule in place of indirect one through the Company's Government, according to some, might suitably facilitate the growing advancement of the country in civilization, arts and sciences. The anti-British revolt of the poorer people was sweepingly dismissed by some in a trite manner:

Inquire again among the poor classes and the result will be, that the general feeling is against their rulers. But of what weight is such an opinion?

The articles anticipated Macaulay's contempt for Indian history and tradition. One article or another postulated that Indian heritage was blank or bleak. The articles also shared James Mill's contemptuous notion of Indian history and culture. They glossed over the British misrule and exploitation in glowing terms. They were apologists for the British rule. It was as if an imperialist scribe spoke through them in an arrogant manner.

The editorial responsibility of Derozio lay in the publication of the above articles emphasizing the regenerative role of the British rule. The question now arises - what was Derosio's attitude towards the British rule?


90. Chattopadhyay, Gautam, loc. cit., p. 100.
The following observation of Derozio in connection with the East Indian agitation at a meeting of the Town Hall, (March, 18, 1831), one may be tempted to suggest, sounds imperialist:

Where are our spoils? Have our rights been restored?

Have our claims been conceded? Did Derozio mean by "spoils" share of the dubious fruits of imperial conquests in which some East Indians played at times a gallant role?

Again the following observation of Derozio at the East Indian meeting at the Town Hall on July 1, 1831, is revealing: - "the introduction of the Reform Bill was but the preliminary step to the introduction of more important reforms". It signified Derozio's faith in British liberalism, which was shared by Rammohun Roy.

In this connection it should be noted that England and 'Revolutionary' France, the two countries of Western hemisphere which were said to have accepted democratic-republican ideals and institutions, were also the two countries, which were notorious for their hegemonism and imperialism. The juxtaposed existence of these positive and negative traits is also discernible in Eurasian Derozio, who was very deeply


92. Ibid, p. 146.
influenced by the Anglo-French culture of the time. It was quite easy for men like Derozio to see no difference between imperialism and progress. They also saw a distinction between European imperialism and Turkish imperialism. While they supported the Greek War of Independence, they were psychologically unable to conceive of any struggle of the subject peoples of Asia and Africa against "beneficial" Anglo-French imperialism.

The French Revolutionary ideal of the liberty, which inspired national movement in parts of Europe, did not take deep roots into Derozio's mind. Derozio advocated individual liberty or freedom. But he did not concern himself with the revolutionary ideal of the Natural Rights of the people. The radical concept of people's rights was embodied in Jean Jacque Rousseau's (1712-1778) 'Contract Sociale' or John Locke's (1632-1704) idea of Social contract. What, however, interested Derozio was Mr. Pierre Louis Morea De Maupertuis's moral philosophy and Lock's 'Style and Reasoning.'

93. The posthumously published translation from Manpertuis reveals a remarkable interest about a mid-18th century philosopher whose reputation, ruined by Voltaire in his own lifetime, has been rehabilitated only in our present century - Sarkar, Sumit, "The Complexities Of Young Bengal", Nineteenth Century Studies, No. 4, October, 1973, p. 508.
Manpertuis has been regarded by a writer as "one of the early precursors of the evolutionary hypothesis" - quoted in Sengupta, Pallab, op. cit., p. 59.

Thomas Paine's (1757-1809) 'Age of Reason' (1807) was in great demand among his students.\textsuperscript{95} One cannot safely say that Paine's 'Common Sense' and 'Rights of Man' became popular among his students.

One may suggest that the idea of anti-colonial liberation struggle in parts of contemporary Europe did not leave its deep trace upon the mind of Derozio. In a romantic spirit he hailed the Greek freedom struggle of his time.\textsuperscript{96} But the history of liberal and national movements of Italy and Germany was no less interesting in his age. His reference to Dante (1265-1321) in his observation on 'The Modern British Poets'\textsuperscript{97} suggests his interest in the ancient Italian poet. But the Mazzinian ideal of unity and independence was a far-off thought. Young Bengal or disciples of Derozio could hardly stand comparison with young Italy or followers of Mazzini. Derozio's 'Objections to the philosophy of (Immanuel) Kant'\textsuperscript{98} (1724-1804) reveal his


\textsuperscript{96} Lord Byron died in the battle-field, while he was fighting in the Greek War of Independence. Byronic spirit of sacrifice for the freedom of his Christian brethren in other country was highly exceptional in literary world.

\textsuperscript{97} The India Gazette, Friday, January 22, 1830, reprinted in \textit{The Calcutta Review}, Vol. 75, 1882, p. 224.

acquaintance with some of Kant's ideas. But Kant's concept of a united Germany and Hegel's (1770-1831) concept of the supremacy of the state were stirring thoughts of the time.

In Derozio's time the movement against the British Government in England was noteworthy. England of 1830s and 40s was as yet far from mid-Victorian stability. It was still the country of intense class struggle, the land not just of the Benthamites, Free Traders, Brougham and Thompson but also of Owen and the Chartists and brilliant literary exposures like 'Hard Times'. Echoes of this other England did occasionally reach Calcutta through the Anglo-Indian press. The India Gazette of 1831 (with Derozio on its editorial staff and his pupils presumably among its avid readers) published a very remarkable letter, which quoted approvingly from More's utopia and incidentally also denounced the Reform Bill as yet another proof of Whig selfishness and treachery.

Turning to India, one may refer to the Chuar Rebellion of Bengal. The Second Chuar Rebellion started in the south-western part of Bankurah and in the north-western part of Midnapur. It was both anti-zamindar and anti-British. It could not be completely suppressed by the British Government.

100. The India Gazette, July 5, 1831.
till 1816. It went on for long at least in parts of Midnapur. The *India Gazette* of January, 1833 published letters on the Chuar Rebellion. A British army officer is here complaining that "the folks in Calcutta believe we have but child's play, but they are sadly mistaken". "The regular troops are quite unfit for this irregular warfare," and though so many villages have been burnt, Ganganarayan is still holding out. Derozio steered clear of the world of popular movement or revolts against the British Government of his time.

In fact, Derozio did not conceive of any anti-British movement or revolution. Nor did he teach anti-English ideas as is supposed by some writers.

The involvement of Derozio in the Eurasian agitation implied Derozio's faith in the constitutional agitation for certain reforms and concessions within the framework of the British empire in India - a faith entertained by Rammohun. What was then Derozio's attitude towards the constitutional agitation of the Bengali intellectuals led by Rammohun?


102. The *India Gazette*, January 21 & 25, 1833.

103. Dr. R.C. Majumdar observes: "To Derozio must be given the credit for inculcating patriotic and anti-English ideas among the younger generation of Bengalis, though his pupils of the Hindoo College" - Majumdar, R. C., *On Rammohun Roy*, op. 48-49.
VI. **Derozio And the Agitation Of The Bengali Intellectuals Led By Rammohun**:

The views of Derozio with regard to Rammohun's agitation for Indian voice in legislation and freedom of the press are not yet ascertainable with any degree of certitude.

At a time when Rammohun raised his voice for the Indianization of the services *The East Indian*, edited by Derozio, showed its pre-occupation with the interests and prospects of the Eurasians. Referring to the employment in the post of Vakeels, the Paper observed:

The original natives of this country have been too long in a state of base degradation to act with any degree of independence when occasion requires. It is from the East Indian, therefore, in the first instance that upright and manly conduct in the capacity of Vakeels may be expected...

Nothing is so far known of Derozio's view on the Permanent Settlement and the Company's monopoly or free trade.

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104. *The East Indian* was conducted by Derozio after the severance of his connection with the Hindu College. Derozio applied to the Government for a license to start the newspaper on May 4, 1831 and obtained it on May 10, 1831 - Home Public Department, May 10, 1831, pp. 138-141.

As regards colonization Derozio wrote:

Colonization is to benefit India beyond all calculations. Derozio thus seems to have unquestionable faith in the liberalism of the English colonists. This is a hint of his sympathy for the settlement of Europeans in the interior and investment of European skill and capital in the country.

VII. Derozio And The Eurasian Agitation

While available materials throw little light on the attitude of Derozio towards the agitation of the Bengali intellectuals led by Rammohun Roy, there is ample evidence to show his involvement in the agitation of the East Indians. He advocated their demands through his newspapers, particularly the East Indian. At a meeting held in the Town Hall on March 28, 1831, in honour of J.W. Ricketts, he delivered an eloquent speech. He also supported the motion of his friend, Charles Porte, the Eurasian artist, that a second petition should be drawn up and presented to the new Parliament and that the agitation of their claim to equal rights as British subjects should be continued. He was the chief speaker at a meeting of the East Indians held in the Town Hall on July 1, 1831,


107. Edwards tells us that Derozio at first opposed the agitation of 1829-30 because many "descendants of European foreigners" were being kept away from it. However, he soon became very active in it. Edwards, Thomas, Henry Derozio, The Eurasian Poet, Teacher and Journalist, p. 112.

107(a) Ibid, pp. 115-120.
for the purpose of approving of the draft of their second petition to be presented to the Parliament.\textsuperscript{108} The petition, according to Thomas Edwards, "bears the touch of Derozio's hand".\textsuperscript{109} The second petition\textsuperscript{110} raised almost all the demands as voiced by the first petition. It resented the exclusion of the East Indians from the privilege of being tried by the English law in the Supreme Court, while they were in the mofussils of the country, and from civil, military and marine services of the country, and even from those situations enjoyed by the Hindus and Muslims. The second petition was transmitted to John Crawfurd for presentation to Parliament, but owing to a change of ministry and other causes, it was never presented.\textsuperscript{111}

It is curious to note that the first and second petitions of the Eurasians in support of their claim to equal rights as British subjects contended that they were united with the Christians in faith, in religion, in language, in habits, in manners, in feelings and opinions.\textsuperscript{112} Derozio, in support of the Eurasian claim to exemption from the jurisdiction of the Company's courts in the interior, seemed to harp upon the similar sentiment. He observed:

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid, p. 142.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid, p. 147.
\textsuperscript{110} For the text of the second petition, Ibid, pp.148-152.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid, p. 147.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid, pp. 146-149; Appendix, p. 229 (section 13 of the first petition).
\end{flushright}
The law, whatever the practice, was unsuited to their condition, for it regarded them as Hindus and Mahomedans; but in what did they assimilate? Their conduct, habits, thoughts, usages and feelings were totally dissimilar. 113

He added that the British law, though not thoroughly good, was better than the jumble of Hindu and Mahomedan laws to which the East Indians were subject in the interior of the country. 113(a)

The pleas advanced by Derozio in support of the Eurasian claim to the judicial privilege of exemption were to compromise the position of a patriotic poet composing poems like 'The Harp of India' and 'To India - My Native Land', which seem to suggest sense of identity.

Derozio supported the Eurasian demand for exemption in the interior and did not consider the Hindu or Mohammedan law suitable for the Eurasians. But where is his plea for the reformation of the Mufussil courts?

Moreover, while supporting the claim of the Eurasians to exemption, Derozio would have no objection to the settlement of East Indians and Europeans in the interior. 114

113. The India Gazette, Wednesday, August, 3, 1831.
113(a). Ibid.
This implied that Derozio acquiesced in the voice of Free Traders and English Capitalists for the removal of restrictions upon the settlement of Europeans in the interior.

Again, Derozio, in claiming the judicial privilege of exemption for the East Indians equally with the English or with the Europeans, went to lend his support to a privilege of the ruling race without hesitation, which proved to be questionable and prejudicial to the interests of the Indian at large. The privilege made it harder for indigo peasants to seek expensive justice in the Supreme Court of Calcutta against the wrongs of the indigo planters. Moreover, it was based on the invidious distinction between the ruling Englishmen and the ruled native in the eye of law. All these questions, which tended to confound national interests, were raised by Ramgopal Ghose in his "Remarks upon the Black Acts" (1850) and by Kissory Chand Mitra later.

Besides, Derozio upheld the demand of the Eurasians for higher services under the Company's Government. Did he raise similar demand for the Indians?

Derozio, however, observed at the East Indian meeting of July 1, 1831 that the admission of East Indians to certain rights did not preclude the possibility of other classes of population also securing for themselves the privileges to which they were entitled. He added that if the East Indians were permitted to enjoy all the privileges they then sought, it
would be impossible to withhold the claims of others. He claimed that they were in reality fighting the battle of the whole community, native, European, and East Indian. But at the same time he "expressed high hopes for the new ministry" of England which, in his words, augured well for East Indians, for they had not now to deal with ignorant and partial men.

It is true that he made a plea to advocate "the just rights of all classes of community" in the prospectus of the East Indian—a plea also advanced by the East India and co-operate society. He exhorted the East Indians "to unite with other native inhabitants of India" in their best interests, a few days before his death. He observed at the Town Hall meeting on March 28, 1831:- "I love my country, and I love justice." In spite of all these pious expressions, he did not take any step to develop the East Indian Movement into a united movement of the East Indian and the Indian for a common cause.

115. Ibid, pp. 144-145.
119. The East Indian, December 17, 1831 reprinted in The India Gazette, December 21, 1831.
The Indians suffered along with the East Indians on many counts. Some of Derozio's students took interest in the Eurasian movement, particularly in the public dinner at the Town Hall in honour of J.W. Ricketts. Derozio came to be regarded as a "guru" of a number of Hindu lads. It could, therefore, be expected that Derozio, who spent a lot of time and energy in the Eurasian movement, would also take interest in the cause of the Indians. But Derozio did not chalk out any programme of action for such purpose before his death.

III. Conclusion:

Derozio's odes on the past glories of India - 'The Harp of India' and "To India - My Native Land" written out of romantic mood did not reflect his ardent desire for freedom of India. In these poems he did not uphold the Indian claim to liberty on the plea of her past greatness, although in some of his poems on Greece he lent support to the Grecian freedom struggle with reference to her past heritage. It is also difficult to say what aspects of India's past Derozio respected.

Derozio was not anti-British. Nor was he opposed to the colonization of Europeans in India. He even went to support the exclusive judicial privilege of European settlers in the interior of the country while he was demanding similar privilege for the Eurasians.
He was occupied with the thought of the prospect or the promotion of the condition of the Eurasians in a constitutional manner rather than with that of the Indians. He had no definite plan or programme of action for the improvement of the lot of the Indians.

Therefore, it is not proper to say that for ardent desire for freedom of the motherland or for the study spirit of anti-British sentiment one may look up to Derozio as a pioneer.

Yet Derozio was the first intellectual of Bengal who composed patriotic odes in memory of India's past greatness. Though an East Indian or Anglo-Indian, he invoked India as his native land in the poems. The picturesque description of India's beautiful landscape in 'the Fakeer of Jungheera' and the recollection of the past beauty and grandeur of the buildings of Shah Shoojah in 'the Ruins of Rajmahal' were revealing of his love of the motherland.

He was the first intellectual of Bengal who voiced the sturdy spirit of protest against the inhuman system of slavery in his poem, 'Freedom To the Slave' (1827). 122

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121. Derozio's poems, "The Harp of India" and "To India - My Native Land" were published respectively in 1827 and 1828. Kashi Prasad Ghose, a student of the Hindu College, wrote verses on India's past greatness in a romantic fashion. His poem 'The Veena or the Indian Lute' was published in the poetical work, 'The Shair And Other Poems' in 1830.

122. For details Chapter III, Section I. pp.159-162.
The Parthenon, an English Magazine, started by the senior students of the Hindu College in 1830 under Derozio's guidance, prayed for cheap justice.\textsuperscript{123} This may suggest that Derozio desired the improvement of the condition of his fellow-countrymen in a constitutional manner.

In the Academic Association, a Debating Club, started by Derozio in conjunction with his students in 1828, the nobility of patriotism was among the subjects discussed and debated.\textsuperscript{124} Peary Chand Mitra, in his reminiscence of Derozio as his teacher, wrote that he often read examples from ancient history of love of justice, patriotism, philanthropy, and self-abnegation, and the way in which he set forth stirred up the mind of his pupils in one way or other. Some were impressed with the excellence of justice, some with patriotism and some with philanthropy. \textsuperscript{125}

\textsuperscript{123} The Bengal Spectator, September 1, 1842.
\textsuperscript{124} Edwards, Thomas, loc. cit., p. 32.
\textsuperscript{125} Mitra, Peary Chand, \textit{A Biographical Sketch Of David Hare}, p. 27.
Derozio stood against the burdens of the age—the superstitions and prejudices of the Hindus. Unlike Alexander Duff who had fervent proselytizing zeal, Derozio challenged the superstitious customs and practices on rational, liberal and humanitarian considerations so much bodily as the compromising stance of Rammohun Roy and his followers would not permit them to do.